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**Course:** Ed. 702.22

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**HW:** Wiki Assignment #1

**Date:** 2/15/10

Action research is research conducted by teachers and other school personnel in order to prove, with statistical evidence, if a teaching method is effective in helping teachers teach, and students learn in an educational environment. According to Geoffrey Mills (2003), “Action research engages teachers in a four-step process: identify an area of focus (the problem), collects data, analyze and interpret data, and develop an action plan” (p.5).

An educational issue for this action research project is the need for teachers to provide bilingual instruction to English language learners (ELLs). Some schools do not provide native language support to English language learners. As a result of the lack of primary language support, some ELLs are doing poorly on standardized tests as stated “on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (as cited in Goldenberg, 2008, p. 11), fourth—grade ELLs scored 36 points below non-ELLs in reading and 25 points below non-ELLs in math.” Research conducted by linguistics in the field of education indicates that students’ native language should be used as an instructional strategy to prevent ELLs from academically failing. The longitudinal study by “Tomas and Collier (1997) (as cited in Garcia and Baker, 2007, p. 35) found that for 700,000 students representing 15 languages in five participating schools systems, ‘the most powerful predictor of academic success’ was schooling for at least four to seven years in the native/heritage language.” Yet some teachers and administrators neglect to provide primary language support for English language learners. Therefore, through action research, I would like to measure the effect of using of (L1) for instructional support on students’ academic achievement. Furthermore, I would like to measure the impact of lack of adequate L1 support for English language learners on students’ academic achievement. The outcome of this action research will help me improve, for example, students’ English language development. Consequently, the outcome of this research will help educators understand that by providing L1 intervention, they can help students succeed academically.

The issue of whether all schools should adopt a bilingual education curriculum has been widely debated by different linguists, and other stakeholders in the field of education. It is an important issue because it concerns the instructional methods teachers use to teach English language learners. Different theories have been put forward about this issue.

According to J. Cummins (1981a) (as cited in Garcia and Baker, 2007, p. 112.), “interdependence principle, L1 is effective in promoting proficiency in L1, transfer of this proficiency to L2 will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L2.” The interdependence principle emphasizes that it is important for ELLs to be able to transfer prior knowledge, for example, sentence structure from L1 to L2. One bilingual instructional strategy that uses L1 as instructional support is the preview review strategy. By using the preview review strategy, the teacher uses (L1) to support instruction; however, the lesson is primarily conducted in the target language (English). On the other hand, using L1 to instruct L2 is not always a successful strategy use with some ELLs.

It has been argued that an English only classroom is a good placement for ELLs. According to W. Butzkamm (2000), “the monolingual principle espouses the exclusion of the native language (or other, previously acquired languages) from the classroom, the target language being both the object and the sole medium of teaching” ( p. 415). With out a doubt, the monolingual principle is not a multicultural principle; however, there are ELLs who do excel with this educational principle. Furthermore, in a mainstream classroom ESL instructional strategies are used to teach children, and some teachers are successful in teaching children the target language using this instructional method.

By examining research on ELLs low academic achievement, one must conclude that ELLs low levels of academic achievement must be related to the lack of L1 support. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the effects of using L1 instructional support and the ELLs overall academic achievement.

The proposed intervention (Independent Variable) would be to provide native language support to ELLs. Therefore, I will implement the preview review bilingual instructional strategy. In 2001, Pucci, and Ulanoff concluded, “that children learned and retained concepts with the preview-review method” (p. 1). Therefore, by using this strategy, students will be able to understand different content concepts in L1 to transfer this acquire knowledge to L2. In addition, another intervention would be to provide ELLs with adequate instructional materials in their native language.

I propose measuring my intervention through classroom observation, student survey, teacher survey, interviews, students’ pretest, students’ posttests, and other assessment records.

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